

# THE LITERACY MATERIALS BULLETIN

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Instructors | Tutors | Learners | Administrators | Coordinators | Resource Centres | Learning Centres

Log #

~~The Literacy Materials~~  
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Welcome to the twenty-fifth issue of the *Literacy Materials Bulletin*. In this edition you will find reviews of three non-fiction and four fiction titles, one student self-help guide, one professional resource book, and two excellent videos. This issue also includes an important evaluation survey which we hope you will complete and FAX back to the Literacy BC office. The information that you share with us is essential for maintaining the high quality publication you have come to expect from the *LMB*.

As I begin my first year as the editor of the *Literacy Materials Bulletin*, I think back to the original purpose of this publication. Our purpose is to provide reliable information about the best materials currently available to practitioners and others who are interested in the literacy field. It is amazing to me how the range of resources has grown. I can recount one incident about 15 years ago, when a potential student arrived at our office carrying a copy of "Our New Friends and Neighbors." You may recall these controlled vocabulary readers from the early 60's that had Dick, Jane, Sally, and their faithful pet Spot as the main characters. He explained that he wanted to be able to read this book because he believed this was the best way to learn. I keep that book as reminder of how far we have come.

Thankfully, those days are long behind us, and now we are almost at the opposite extreme. There are so many potential resources that it is often difficult to make good choices. Assisting in that process is, of course, the role of the *Literacy Materials Bulletin*. As a committee we have the luxury of field-testing and choosing from at least 40 to 50 resources each year. At our annual meeting and throughout the year we preview at least 100 different books, videos and other resources. All of this results in the 24 reviews that you see in the spring and fall editions of the *Bulletin*.

Working on the *Literacy Materials Bulletin* is a most enjoyable part of my week. I have received tremendous cooperation and support from all the committee members as well as our coordinator, May Chan, at the Literacy BC office in Vancouver. I hope you will enjoy reading this *Bulletin* as much as we enjoyed putting it together for you. □

**Title:** The Call of the Wild (1999)  
**Author:** Jack London, adapted by Stephen Feinstein  
**Publisher:** Saddleback Publishing Inc.  
**Distributor:** Foothills Educational Materials  
930-13 Ave. S.W., Calgary, Alberta, T2R 0L4  
Toll free: 1-877-244-5994 Fax: 1-403-244-6897  
Email: [info@sdlback.com](mailto:info@sdlback.com) Website: [www.sdlback.com](http://www.sdlback.com)  
**Available:** Distributor or your local bookstore  
**Price:** \$11.95 (reader), \$25.00 (study guide)  
**ISBN:** 1-56254-254-0 (reader)

## The Call of the Wild

Reviewed by Nancy Ross, Instructor

This memorable story is one of a series of classic novels that has been adapted for easier reading. *Frankenstein*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Treasure Island* are examples of other books in the Saddleback Classics series. Each novel comes with a study guide.

Jack London's famous novel is about a big, strong dog named Buck, who is kidnapped from a loving home and sent north to Alaska to work as a sled dog during the Gold Rush. He is badly treated, and then sold several times. Although he finally finds an owner whom he worships, his nature has changed through his experiences. His spirit has hardened. Finally, Buck hears the "call of the wild," and he joins his wild brothers, who are the subject of numerous legends.

Many students enjoyed this novel. It

especially appealed to animal lovers. Many sympathized with the dog, for having to endure such cruelty and mistreatment. They also found the historical setting of the Gold Rush fascinating. The story was easy to read and understand, and students liked the length (79 pages), the print size, and the illustrations. I also noticed the students were happy to learn that they had read a famous classic novel.

The study guide is a useful addition to the book. Even if one didn't use the guide completely, it has good suggestions. I would consider using this book as a class novel, with the entire group of students reading and writing about it. It was an easy-to-follow novel that many students found exciting and heart-warming, and the content was appropriate for everyone. □

of him. Yet again and again he was thrown down and choked. Finally the men were able to file the heavy brass collar from his neck. Then the rope was removed, and Buck was flung into a crate that was like a cage.

There he lay for the rest of the night, nursing his anger and wounded pride. Buck could not understand what it all meant. What did they want with him, these strange men? Why were they keeping him locked up in this narrow crate? He did not know why. But he had the feeling that something terrible was going to happen to him.

Several times during the night he sprang to his feet when the shed door rattled open. He was expecting to see the Judge, or the boys at least. But each time it was the ugly face of the bartender looking in at him by the light of a candle. And each time the happy bark that had welled up in Buck's throat was twisted into a growl.

Soon the bartender left him alone. In the morning, four men came and picked up the crate. This meant more trouble, Buck decided, for the men were evil-looking.



When Buck raged at them through the bars, they laughed and poked sticks at him. At first Buck attacked the sticks with his teeth. Then he saw that this was what the men wanted. So he lay down silently and allowed the crate to be lifted into a wagon.

Then Buck, in his crate, began a passage through many hands. Clerks in the express office took charge of him. Then he was put in another wagon. Next, a truck carried him, along with many other boxes, onto a ferry boat. After he was moved off the ferry into





**Title:** Live Wire Series: Real Lives Series, selected titles  
**Author:** Various  
**Publisher:** Hodder & Stoughton in association with The Basic Skills Agency  
**Distributor:** Bacon & Hughes  
 81 Auriga Drive, Unit 30, Ottawa, Ontario, K2E 7Y5  
 Toll free: 1-800-563-2468 Fax: 613-226-8121 Email: [bacon@storm.ca](mailto:bacon@storm.ca)  
**Available:** Distributor or your local bookstore  
**ISBN:**

<i>Marie Curie</i>	0-340-78051-7	<i>Cleopatra</i>	0-340-74268-2
<i>Henry VIII</i>	0-340-77659-5	<i>Vincent Van Gogh</i>	0-340-74266-6
<i>Alberta Einstein</i>	0-340-77617-X	<i>Shakespeare</i>	0-340-74271-2
<i>Joan of Arc</i>	0-340-77305-7	<i>Anne Frank</i>	0-340-71160-4

**Price:** \$7.95-\$9.95

## Marie Curie, Albert Einstein

Reviewed by Ron Stinson, Instructor

The Real Lives books are about famous people from the worlds of sport, film and music, and politics and history. These true stories contain lots of wonderful photographs, and interesting information about people who have changed the way we live today. The authors introduce the reader to famous people and are able to capture the feelings of discovery, love, sadness, and achievement in such a magnificent way that students can't put the books down. In fact, students who read these books wanted to read more selections from this series that contains 131 titles.

The high interest and easy but exciting vocabulary make these books a welcome addition to literacy classrooms, and the large print and abundance of white space make them easy to read. Students in our fundamental level literacy program found this material wonderful for personal recreational reading. In their evaluations, students liked the photos, the true stories

and learning about the lives of interesting and famous people. Also, these books generated lots of interest and enthusiasm when used by students for classroom discussion. Some students wanted more information about Marie Curie and Albert Einstein. As a result, this thirst for more knowledge led them to the college library where they researched and gathered more information that they brought back to the classroom to share with their classmates.

Finally, the positive instructor and learner response to these books has prompted their inclusion in our fundamental literacy curriculum. We will use this material to design structured individual and group learning activities that develop students' basic literacy skills and enrich their lives through learning about famous people. □



Marie Curie's laboratory in 1898.

In her last year at university, she met Pierre Curie.  
 Pierre Curie was also very clever.  
 He was also a scientist.  
 They fell in love.  
 They were married on 26 July, 1895.  
 Marie's family came from Poland to be at the wedding.

It was an exciting time in Paris.  
 Lots of new things were being developed.  
 Electricity was being used for the first time.  
 The telephone was new.  
 Bicycles were new and so were moving pictures.

It was a time of discovery.



**SAMPLE PAGE** (reduced to 65% of its size) Selection from *Marie Curie* by Sarah Blackmore  
 Reproduced with permission from Bacon & Hughes Limited. Tel: 1-800-563-2468 Email: [bacon@storm.ca](mailto:bacon@storm.ca)  
 Published by Hodder & Stoughton Educational

**Title/Author:** **The Klondike Gold Rush**  
**Literacy Learning Guide for Educators (2000) / Stephen Fergusson**  
**Photographs from 1896-1899 (1997) / Graham Wilson**  
**A Book of Postcards (1997) / Graham Wilson**

**Publisher:** Wolf Creek Books  
 Box 31275, 211 Main Street, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 5P7  
 Tel: 867-668-4260 Fax: 867-668-4472  
 Email: [info@wolfcreek.ca](mailto:info@wolfcreek.ca) Website: [www.wolfcreek.ca](http://www.wolfcreek.ca)

**Available:** Publisher

**ISBN/Price:**

<i>Literacy Learning Guide for Educators</i>	0-9687091-09	\$19.95
<i>Photographs from 1896-1899</i>	0-96819550-4	\$12.95
<i>A Book of Postcards</i>	0-9681955-1-2	\$12.95

## The Klondike Gold Rush

Reviewed by Debbie Booth-Johnson, Instructor

This is a remarkable set of original photographs and accompanying text about the Klondike Gold Rush. They have been compiled into three unique resources.

The *Literacy Learning Guide for Educators* uses an extra large format for photos and direct quotes from people who were there. These are used as the basis for discussion and suggested follow-up writing activities that are arranged into beginner, intermediate and advanced categories depending upon the amount of writing required. One instructor felt these suggestions were a good way of introducing photos that can tell a story perhaps better than words can.

The second text, *Photographs from 1896 - 1899*, provides a more complete description of that era with many more original photos and text that traces the history from the original Bonanza in 1896 through to the end of the Gold Rush only three years later.

It is an excellent resource for anyone who wants to learn about this important event in Canadian history.

The third resource is actually a collection of 28 postcards, which can be taken apart and used for discussion or writing activities. They would be most appropriate as a follow-up to discussions about the contrast between our romantic idea of the gold rush, and what it was really like for the men and women who followed their dreams to the Klondike.

The response to these books has been very positive. Both students and instructors appreciate the value of these photos and text as a springboard for conversation and writing ideas. One student commented, "These pictures were exciting. I didn't know it was like that. They revealed how determined and strong people were back then." □





## THE CHILKOOT AND DEAD HORSE TRAIL

The barbarity and cruelty of the White Pass Trail is difficult to imagine. This trail led from Skagway through the dense coastal rain forest to a relatively low summit and the headwaters of the Yukon River. The White Pass Trail was about 600 feet lower than the popular Chilkoot Trail to the north but was far more rugged.

The White Pass Trail was a narrow path that followed the Skagway River for much of its course. This path was steep and had numerous sink holes where horses easily broke ankles and were impaled by stumps. Gold fever drove stampedeers to abuse their half-starved horses in the most horrible manner. When the horses dropped from exhaustion or broken limbs, the line of miners and pack animals walked over them until they became part of the trail. For this reason the White Pass became known as the trail of "Dead Horses." More than 3,000 horses died during the first year of the gold rush.

The Chilkoot Trail was swarmed by thousands of stampedeers. This ancient Indian trade route to the interior became famous worldwide. The wealthy stampedeers hired Indian packers to ferry enormous mounds of supplies across this rugged landscape. Others simply pulled cases and packs onto their backs and like ants, struggled along the trail. Many speculate that more stampedeers would have perished without the sage advice and help of the Indian packers and guides. The Chilkoot was the preferred overland route to the Yukon although it posed many challenges to all who travelled on this trail.

By 1899 a railway was completed through the White Pass Valley to the city of Whitehorse and these trails were largely forgotten.



Opposite: Men hauling sleds up "Jacob's Ladder," in a canyon near Sheep Camp, Chilkoot Trail, Alaska.

**Title:** 52 Days by Camel: My Sahara Adventure (1998)  
**Author:** Lawrie Raskin with Debora Pearson  
**Publisher:** Annick Press Ltd.  
 Website: [www.annickpress.com](http://www.annickpress.com)  
**Distributor:** Firefly Books Ltd.  
 3680 Victoria Park Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, M2H 3K1  
 Tel: 1-800-387-6192 Fax: 1-800-450-0391  
 Email: [service@fireflybooks.com](mailto:service@fireflybooks.com) Website: [www.fireflybooks.com](http://www.fireflybooks.com)  
**Available:** Distributor or your local bookstore  
**ISBN:** 1-55037-518-0 (paperback)  
**Price:** \$14.95

## 52 Days by Camel

Reviewed by Janet Mantyka, Instructor

*52 Days by Camel*, a nonfiction adventure book, received positive responses from students and literacy practitioners. In this book, the author takes his readers by camel on a journey through the Sahara Desert. He captivates his audience through his lively tone, his journal style text, his use of plain language, and his interesting information about desert life. Facts about camels, survival words in Arabic, eating with your hands, how to stay cool by drinking hot tea, how to avoid desert dangers, and how to make bread on a bed of rocks are only a few things the reader learns while accompanying the author on this adventure.

Student comments included: "I really liked the pictures," "a true adventure story that captures the imagination," "a writer that never lost sight of his dreams," "I learned about a new culture," "I learned about the history of other people," "The print size was comfortable," and "It was easy to understand."

Instructor comments included: "I could identify with the traveling theme," "I liked that each chapter had a map and you were able to follow along on the adventure," "The information sidebars were informative, colourful, and fun to write and talk about," "We learned about a different culture," and "The writer made it seem like we were along on his adventure."

Lawrie Raskin wrote this book for children, however, because of the colourful layout of the book, his descriptive words, his travel theme, and his information sidebars there is appeal for young and old. I recommend this book to be added to a classroom collection of books for independent reading. One student agrees: "I recommend this book for class study. It would be exciting to see what other people think." □





Mohammed was one of the first African kids I really got to know. He was a big fan of Clint Eastwood and loved talking about his movies.

where the sandstorm had occurred, Armin and I met a boy named Mohammed. Mohammed loved talking about Clint Eastwood, so I tried my best to answer his many questions about Clint and the movies he had starred in. But Mohammed did more than chat about Westerns. After listening to me say how much I wanted to see the people of the desert, he arranged for me and Armin to share a meal with some nearby nomads in their tent. Along with seeing the desert, I had always wanted to see inside a nomad's tent. Now it was finally about to happen!

Stepping into the nomads' tent was like entering another world. The tent was made

## Desert Dangers

**Y**ou might think that the most dangerous things people face in the desert are the heat and the risk of running out of water. But desert travellers soon learn to dread exactly the opposite things. When the sun sets at night and the temperature suddenly drops, the intense desert cold can feel worse than the daytime heat, especially if you aren't wearing warm clothing, a hat, and gloves. Water can even freeze overnight in a water bottle. Rainstorms in the mountains can race down to the desert, causing sudden floods and leaving people stranded without food and shelter. It is said that more people have been drowned by flash floods in the desert than have died of thirst.

## Get Wind of This!

How powerful can the wind be during a sandstorm? During one Sahara sandstorm, the wind carried red dust as far away as the Swiss Alps and turned its snow-capped mountain peaks pink!

**Title:** The Buried City of Pompeii: What it was Like When Vesuvius Exploded (1997)  
**Author:** Shelley Tanaka  
**Publisher:** Madison Press Books  
**Distributor:** Scholastic Canada  
175 Hillmount Road, Markham, Ontario, L6C 1Z7  
Tel: 1-800-268-3860 Fax: 1-800-387-4944  
Email: [custserv@scholastic.ca](mailto:custserv@scholastic.ca) Website: [www.scholastic.ca](http://www.scholastic.ca)  
**Available:** Distributor or your local bookstore  
**ISBN:** 0-590-12376-9  
**Price:** \$7.99

## The Buried City of Pompeii

Reviewed by Debbie Booth-Johnson, Instructor

*The Buried City of Pompeii* uses a combination of historical fiction and factual descriptions, photographs and drawings to bring this lost city to life. The book is divided into two sections; the first part is historical fiction describing events on the day that Vesuvius erupted as seen through the eyes of one man. He was the main servant for a wealthy family who owned the largest villa so far uncovered at the site of Pompeii. It describes the scene: first the hot ash and pumice rains down on the city continuing for about 12 hours, and then the final flow of ash and mud buries the city completely. The author provides drawings and written images of the citizens of Pompeii as they struggle with the horrific events of August 24, 79 AD.

The second part or Epilogue describes the history of Pompeii from the time of the eruption to its initial discovery by treasure seekers in 1772. The book explains its development as an archaeological site beginning in 1860 through to the present day. About 2,000,000 visitors a year tour

the ruins of the once beautiful Roman city of Pompeii.

This is a fascinating story that many students are unfamiliar with. It is presented in an accessible text and picture format. The print is large and the accompanying photos are well explained. Sometimes the Roman names are a bit difficult, but there is a glossary to help explain them. Students can enjoy the historical fiction as well as the factual descriptions of the ancient materials and human remains that have been uncovered over the years at this site.

One student thought all the pictures and drawings were excellent. She enjoyed it so much that she decided to read it orally with her daughter so they could learn together. Another student called the story "amazing ... I didn't know much about ancient Roman culture, but now I do." This book would be a welcome addition to any literacy classroom library. □



## HOW WAS POMPEII BURIED?

Scientists have examined the layers of debris that fell on Pompeii to help them understand exactly what happened when Vesuvius erupted. The first phase of the eruption consisted of a slow accumulation of pumice. Most people escaped from the city during this time. Those who remained lost their lives when the first surge of hot ash and gas sped down the mountainside. This surge left behind a deposit of hardened volcanic sand (right). While Pompeii was buried under about twelve feet (4 meters) of pumice and ash, the town of Herculaneum was overwhelmed by 65 feet (20 meters) of debris.



But it didn't. With every passing hour, another 6 inches (15 centimeters) of pumice covered Pompeii. By late afternoon, the sky was almost black. Roofs caved in. Walls collapsed as earth tremors rocked the city.

At midnight, the column of ash and pumice finally collapsed back to earth. That's when superhot rock and gas spewed up out of the volcano and began to flow down the mountain, smothering and burning up the countryside.

The avalanche reached the walls of Pompeii at 5:30 the next morning. The people who remained in the city died from the extreme heat, or they were suffocated as they breathed in the hot ash. Within three hours, the city was completely buried.



**Title:** *Qatuwas* (1997)  
**Producer:** Qatuwas Productions Inc. in cooperation with the National Film Board of Canada  
**Distributor:** National Film Board of Canada  
PO Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville, Montreal, Quebec, H3C 3H3  
Toll free: 1-800-267-7710 Fax: 514-283-7564  
Website: [www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca)  
**Available:** Distributor  
**Order Code:** 113C9196127  
**Price:** \$39.95

## **Qatuwas: People Gathering Together**

Reviewed by Joann Green, First Nations Resource Member

The *Qatuwas* video is designed for a range of audiences and suitable for classroom use. The video is only 58 minutes long. It gives a wonderful glimpse of the First Nations people of the Pacific Coast and the importance of their cultural identity. "Qatuwas" means people gathering in one place. It is a wonderful resource for anyone who is interested in learning about First Nations cultural identity. This video presents the celebration of First Nations traditional culture and supports the process of transmitting it to future generations. It shows how the Heiltsuk people of Bella Bella play an important role in this revival of the Northwest coast canoe culture as 30 communities participate in this historical journey.

Not only could *Qatuwas* be used in a classroom setting, it would also be an excellent resource for community cultural programs for many First Nations communities that are working on enhancing and reviving their cultural identity. This video could be integrated into lessons that examine past and present aboriginal cultures.

In the *Qatuwas* video it states that the canoe culture has been non-existent for over 100 years. A comparison of the past and present use of transportation could be developed, and resource people from the community brought in to share stories about the canoe culture. Local carvers and painters could also be brought in to give lessons on building a canoe and using traditional painting techniques.

Some of the students' comments about the video were:

"When the canoes came into our community, I related the experience to watching through our ancestors' eyes since that many canoes have not come into our village in over 100 years!!"

"I enjoyed the video because there were lots of things I did not know about First Nations culture. I think it's great that there are some First Nations keeping their cultures alive and passing their traditions down to their children." □

**Title:** **Champions of the Wild**, selected titles  
**Producers:** Christian Bruyere and Ian Herring (Omni Film), George Johnson (NFB)  
**Distributor:** National Film Board of Canada  
P.O. Box 6100, STN Centre-Ville, Montreal, Quebec, H3C 3H5  
Toll free: 1-800-267-7710 Fax: 514-283-7564  
Website: [www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca)  
**Available:** Distributor  
**Order Code:** *Grizzlies* (1997) 113C9197093  
*Wolves* (1997) 113C9197103  
*Orcas* (1997) 113C9197100  
**Price:** \$39.95 each

## Grizzlies

Reviewed by Judy Rose, Instructor

*Grizzlies* is the committee members' choice from the Champions of the Wild series, which includes 13 videos. Wayne McCrory, a biologist, and founder of the Valhalla Wilderness Society, has spent most of his adult life passionately campaigning to protect the grizzly and the rare white spirit bear of the British Columbia rain forest. He is able to describe the grizzlies' activities with scientific accuracy as well as communicate his mission to save them.

McCrory takes his viewers through breathtaking scenery in the protected wilderness areas of the Kootenays. He narrates a yearlong cycle in the bears' lives to help explain why the bears need these huge tracts of land to survive. He refers to grizzlies as "an indicator species" because they will be the first species to go when human activity comes too close. McCrory then moves the viewer to Princess Royal Island off the west coast of British Columbia to describe the battle to save the white spirit bears, called Kermode bears, which are a rare colour variation hybrid of the black bear. This video provides the scientific, factual

information that literacy learners struggle to get from books. It also provides some funny scenes, such as the one where three grizzlies are vigorously rubbing against a tree at the same time in order to mark it. The message of how we can all contribute to save the old growth forests for the bears is clear and effectively communicated.

The literacy group who watched the video reported that they were particularly interested in endangered species and wanted more information on the way the natural world is being threatened in B.C. They felt that this video would be useful for inner-city people who don't have a chance to see the pristine wilderness or the grizzlies that live there.

At 25 minutes, this video, *Grizzlies*, could be shown to stimulate discussion as part of a larger unit on the geography of B.C., endangered species, or a number of other current environmental issues in the news. □

**Title:** Black Nell: The Adventures of a Coyote (1998)  
**Author:** Shirley Woods  
**Publisher:** Groundwood Books  
720 Bathurst Street, Suite 500, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2R4  
Tel: 416-537-2501 Fax: 416-537-4647  
Website: [www.groundwoodbooks.com](http://www.groundwoodbooks.com)  
**Available:** Publisher or your local bookstore  
**ISBN:** 0-88899-319-6 (paperback)  
**Price:** \$7.95

## Black Nell

Reviewed by Nancy Ross, Instructor

This is a short adventure novel written from the point of view of a young coyote named Nell. Unusual for her black colour, the story follows Nell from her birth. As she grows and learns about survival with her brothers and sisters, she leaves the family at adolescence, and eventually struggles to survive on her own in the forests of eastern Canada.

Throughout the story, Nell encounters the dangers that humans have placed in her way: thoughtless boys, hunters, trappers and farmers who all see Nell as something to kill. The encroachment of humans is seen from Nell's point of view, as she discovers less and less habitable forest where she can exist in peace. Finally, after several experiences that nearly kill her, Nell is taken to a wildlife centre, nursed back to health and released in the northern forests.

This book was perfect for many

students: it was easy to follow and read, and exciting as Nell encountered her many challenges. By writing the story from Nell's point of view, the readers identified with her and understood the impact of humans on wildlife. I also liked the way the writer was able to make us identify with Nell's reactions without putting human emotions and traits upon her. The few illustrations were good, simple portrayals that fit into the story beautifully.

The students also liked the way this story taught them about coyotes, how they live, what they eat, and how they survive. Commented one, "It teaches people about nature and the seasons and how survival takes place for all the animals in the forest." Another student took it home to read to her young daughter, and everyone agreed that they would recommend it to a friend. □



#### BLACK NELL

The pups were born blind and wouldn't be able to see until they were ten days old. All they could manage was to snuggle up to their mother, who fed them with her milk and kept them warm with her body.

Nell's mother resembled a small wolf or a German shepherd dog. She had a pointed nose, upright ears, long legs and a bushy tail. Her coat was the color of salt and pepper, with black markings across her shoulders and down her back. Her chest was gray, her legs and ears tawny-brown, and she had a black tip to her tail.

After she had fed her newborn babies and they were sleeping at her side, she heard a soft scuffling at the entrance to the den. Moments later, Nell's father shouldered his way through the narrow tunnel. He was bigger than his mate and had more silver in his coat. In his jaws he carried a freshly killed rabbit.

While Nell's mother tore the rabbit apart and ate it, he sniffed the pups and gave each one a lick. Until the babies were weaned, it was his duty to bring food to their mother and to care for them during the short periods she was away from the den.



**Title:** Kensuke's Kingdom  
**Author:** Michael Morpurgo  
**Publisher:** Egmont Books  
**Distributor:** Stewart House Publishing  
 290 North Queen Street, Suite 210, Etobicoke, Ontario, M9C 5K4  
 Toll free: 1-866-474-3478 Toll free fax: 1-866-253-3377  
 Email: [info@stewarthousepub.com](mailto:info@stewarthousepub.com)  
 Website: [www.stewarthousepub.com](http://www.stewarthousepub.com)  
**Available:** Distributor or your local bookstore  
**ISBN:** 0-7497-3639-9  
**Price:** \$9.99

## Kensuke's Kingdom

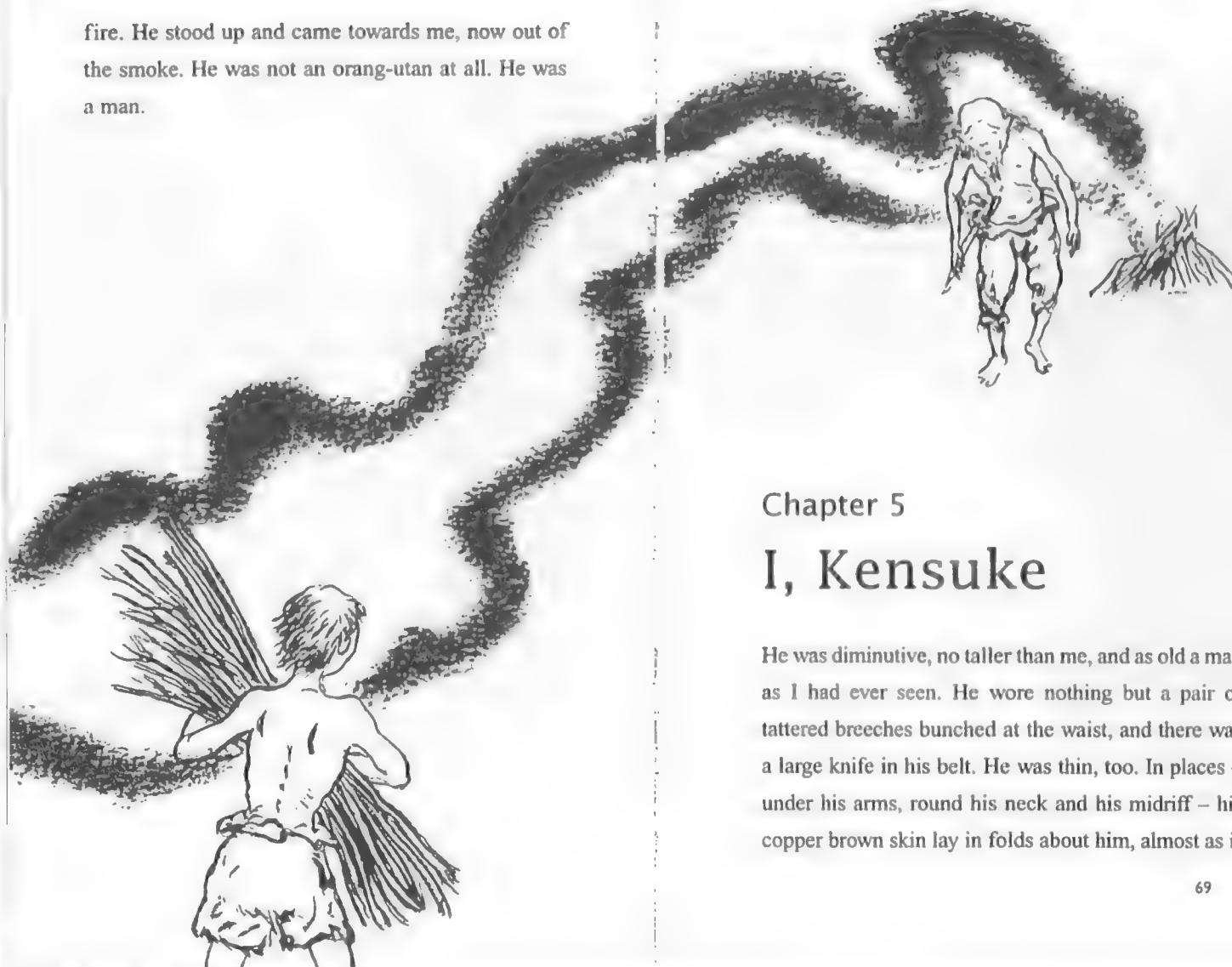
Reviewed by Arlee Schmidt, Student Resource Member and Debbie Booth-Johnson, Instructor

This novel is about a boy and his adventures after he is washed overboard into the Pacific Ocean. He started his journey to sail around the world with his family, but midway through the trip he is washed overboard while his parents are sleeping. Eventually he is washed up on an island. Even though he is alive, he realizes that he has very little chance of surviving alone on this island. Just when he has given up all hope, a mysterious stranger begins to leave food and water out for him which saves the boy. This stranger is an old Japanese soldier named Kensuke. As soon as the boy regains his strength, he tries to build a signal fire to draw attention to the island, but Kensuke will not allow this fire to burn. He does not want to draw any attention to the island because he has lived there as a hermit since the end of the Second World War, and he does not want to be found. The boy realizes he must develop a trusting relationship with Kensuke in order to survive and perhaps one-day

leave the island. It takes time and patience on both their parts, but eventually the bond between Kensuke and the boy grows strong. The ending to this story is bitter sweet. Kensuke realizes he must sacrifice his way of life to allow his young friend a chance at a more normal existence. The boy also knows that he will never again have such a wise and patient teacher or friend as Kensuke.

The print size is easy to read, and the black and white drawings give you a better understanding of the story. One student who read the novel loved it. Another suggested that, for beginning readers, it would be a good idea for the teacher to read it to the students because it might be too difficult for them. One student said, "It was good for someone who is up for a good challenge and wants to develop their reading skills." All in all, a ten out of ten. □

fire. He stood up and came towards me, now out of the smoke. He was not an orang-utan at all. He was a man.



## Chapter 5

# I, Kensuke

He was diminutive, no taller than me, and as old a man as I had ever seen. He wore nothing but a pair of tattered breeches bunched at the waist, and there was a large knife in his belt. He was thin, too. In places – under his arms, round his neck and his midriff – his copper brown skin lay in folds about him, almost as if



**Title:** **Staying Afloat**  
**Author:** **Donna Barreca and Margaret Hepler**  
**Publisher:** **Vancouver Community College**  
 1155 East Broadway, Box 24620, Stn. F, Vancouver, BC, V5N 5T9  
 Tel: 604-871-7333 Fax: 604-871-7311  
 Website: [www.vcc.bc.ca/bookstore](http://www.vcc.bc.ca/bookstore)  
**Available:** **Publisher**  
**ISBN:** **0-921218-91-5**  
**Price:** **\$31.50**

## Staying Afloat

Reviewed by Judy Rose, Instructor

*Staying Afloat* is a life skills and English guide for ESL and ABE students developed at Vancouver Community College

*Staying Afloat* contains seven units: Stress Management, Relationships and Change, Parenting, Living in a Culturally Diverse Society, Interpersonal Communication, Career Planning, and Seeking Help in Canada. Each unit lays out a number of topics and lesson plans with readings, handouts and suggested activities.

In the Stress Management unit two ink drawings show a problematic family kitchen scene just before mealtime, and also a mother asleep over her books late at night. Discussion questions related to the drawings are followed by vocabulary and comprehension exercises at both lower and higher reading levels. The material covers sources of stress and strategies for helping yourself in stressful situations. There is also an annotated bibliography at the end of the unit to help instructors and students find more information on the topic.

I used Stress Management with intermediate ESL students, and they were enthusiastic about

the relevant discussion topics. They were able to read and complete the exercises independently. Another instructor who used the book in an intermediate ABE class reported that the students enjoyed the group activities, but she only used some of the written exercises. For the literacy classes, another instructor reported that the Interpersonal Communication unit was very effective, and the students said that they had fun with the exercises and learned to communicate better.

As a teaching resource, this manual is well organized and provides ready to use exercises as well as many suggested activities. My only word of caution is that some of the topics covered may be sensitive to students. Instructors need to decide how to prepare students to feel safe while discussing topics that may be difficult for them to talk about. Some instructors may want to team teach with a counselor for some of the units as the author suggests, or may only use some of the units. Those units that I referred to seem to be the most accessible to the widest variety of people. □



## Stress Management

### What is Stress?

Stress is

- a) any change or stressor that you have to adjust to, and
- b) your reaction to that change.

Stress is a normal part of life. All adult students deal with pressures from school, work, family, relationships, health or money. Stress can result from any change in your life even if it is positive, like moving or having a baby.

How well do you cope with the pressures in your life?



Handout A

### Sources of Stress

#### 1. The Environment

This includes sources of stress outside of yourself or your control, like noise, or pollution. It can also include the stress caused by getting or losing a job, starting a new course, parenting or being a single parent, dealing with school or work or housework, being new to Canada, or not being able to speak English well.

#### 2. Physiological Causes

This refers to anything going on in your body. If you are tired, sick, in chronic pain, physically out of shape or in poor health, you will feel more stressed out than someone who is healthy. You will also find it more difficult to concentrate, study and succeed in school.

#### 3. Your Thoughts

People cope with the same stress in different ways. For one student, school can be fun and challenging; for another, it can be a struggle. The way you think about a situation can make you feel more or less stressed.

**Title:** In the Magic Corridor: Stories for Language Learning (1992)  
**Author:** Holly L. Eubanks, illustrated by Ann C. Chapin  
**Publisher:** Dominic Press  
 Website: [www.Dominic.com](http://www.Dominic.com)  
**Distributor:** Gage Learning Corporation  
 164 Commander Boulevard, Toronto, Ontario, M1S 3C7  
 Tel: 1-800-667-1115 Fax: 416-293-0846  
 Email: [orders@gagelearning.com](mailto:orders@gagelearning.com) Web Site: [www.gagelearning.com](http://www.gagelearning.com)  
**Available:** Distributor or your local bookstore  
**ISBN:** 1-56270-018-9  
**Price:** \$19.50

## In the Magic Corridor

Reviewed by Claudia Mason, Instructor

*In the Magic Corridor* is a book of ten legends or fairy tales from different countries. Each story is followed by a set of exercises, which help students develop skills in reading comprehension, story interpretation, creative thinking, grammar, and vocabulary development. Ann C. Chapin draws beautiful illustrations for each story.

Students enjoyed the "interesting stories with life lessons." The stories are written with good descriptive language and lead to lively discussions. The exercises are open-ended and provide opportunities for students to form their own moral opinions. One instructor found that some of the exercises were not useful, so she made up some of her own.

One of the stories, from China, is called, "Good News or Bad." The tale captures our attention from the beginning. It tells the story of an old man and his seven sons, only one of whom still lives with him on the farm. As the old man goes through a

series of changes and experiences in his life, each event is scrutinized by his neighbours and judged as either "good news or bad." The old man responds each time with the questions, "...who is to say what is good fortune and what is bad?" Readers are left with the same tantalizing question at the end of the story, providing an excellent opportunity for discussion and writing. This story, like many in the collection, can be easily divided into sections, allowing opportunities for inferring information and predicting what will happen next. This has led to some lively group discussions as well as some creative and thoughtful paragraph writing.

*In the Magic Corridor* not only contains interesting and thought provoking stories, it is also attractive as a text. Both students and teachers have enjoyed its beautiful illustrations, and well-designed layout as well as the style and size of print. While it seems to work best with groups, I would also recommend it for individuals who enjoy stories with moral lessons. □



## GOOD NEWS OR BAD?



n old man had seven sons. Six were grown, and had gone into the world to live their own lives. Only the seventh remained at home with his father.

"Tch, tch, tch," clucked the neighbors. "You are an old man. All your sons should be at home to help you. They are selfish boys. What a shame, what a shame!"

"Who can say," answered the old man quietly, "what is a shame and what is not?"

"The old fool," whispered the neighbors. "He understands nothing at all about life."

The next month the neighbors looked out their windows. They watched in surprise as the old man and his son moved to a nearby farm.

"Where are you going?" they asked.

"To my farm," answered the old man.

"To your farm? How did you get this farm?" asked the neighbors enviously.

"My sons are doing well. They bought me this farm. They bought me a horse, too." The old man pointed to a sleek stallion, tied to the gate.

"My, my!" declared the neighbors. "What good news! What good fortune! You are so lucky!"

"So it seems," replied the old man. "But who is to say what is good fortune and what is bad?"





**Title:** Learning to Think, Learning to Learn  
**Author:** Jennifer Cromley  
**Publisher:** National Institute for Literacy  
1775 I St., N.W. Suite 730, Washington, D.C. 20006-2401  
Tel: 202-233-2025 Fax: 202-233-2050  
Website: [www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov)  
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[http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/fellowship/cromley\\_report.pdf](http://www.nifl.gov/nifl/fellowship/cromley_report.pdf)  
**Price:** Free

## Learning to Think, Learning to Learn

Reviewed by Rena Neufeld, Instructor

Most teachers of adult students rarely see any research on teaching, thinking or learning. If they do read and understand such research, it is often unclear how these findings translate into actual teaching practice. This publication attempts to bridge the gap between research and practice for adult educators.

The research and findings presented here are based on the idea that teaching means teaching students to think, and learning is a process of coming to understand the world. The approach taken in this report is that all learning involves active thinking, and teaching should be based on what we know about how the mind takes in and organizes information. The author uses current research to offer ideas and approaches for diagnosing and solving problems in the classroom.

The book contains 18 fact sheets on learning and thinking: each fact sheet is about 10 pages long and can be read and understood on its own without reading the whole report. The fact sheets incorporate learning methods based on research. They are organized into:

1. Reflective questions to orient you to the topic.
2. Quotes from teachers, learners, and researchers that show how the information is relevant.
3. A summary of the ideas and evidence.
4. What this means for teachers.
5. A set of short lesson ideas (not full lesson plans) based on the findings.

Topics addressed in the fact sheets include: making connections, memory and learning, how thinking develops, the importance of teaching content, critical thinking, active learning, and problem-based learning. There are two useful appendices that address the questions of learning styles and brain-based learning.

In presenting this report the author strives to use plain language. The format of the report makes it easy to learn about individual topics without tackling the entire document. As the author suggests, "It is ideal for teachers or tutors who want to get new ideas about teaching methods and have perhaps 30 minutes each Friday afternoon to do a little professional reading." □

## WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

### An Invitation for New Members

We are presently looking for two new committee members. The *Literacy Materials Bulletin* Committee is open to all adult literacy instructors who may be working in a variety of settings: colleges, community based agencies or school districts, across the province of British Columbia. As a member of this committee we would expect you to:

- Be an experienced literacy instructor of adults with easy access to groups of adult literacy students
- Look for appropriate new literacy materials
- Preview and field-test 12 to 16 items between September and June
- Participate in one conference call in December
- Attend one committee meeting in Vancouver in April or May
- Write at least two reviews for publication each year

If you are interested in learning more about our committee and its work, we would be very pleased to hear from you. Please contact Debbie Booth-Johnson at (250) 652-0679 or by email at [debbj@thehub.capcollege.bc.ca](mailto:debbj@thehub.capcollege.bc.ca)

## Changes to the Committee

Ruth Chambers from Okanagan University College in Kelowna resigned from our committee in September 2001 because her teaching assignment changed. Ruth has been a valuable member of the committee since 1999. We will miss her contributions to the *Bulletin* and her thoughtful comments at our meetings.

Our newest committee member is Janet Mantyka, who is a literacy instructor at the Penticton campus of OUC. Janet is a great addition to our committee who is always keen to get started with a new set of materials. We appreciate the enthusiasm and commitment she brings to the *Literacy Materials Bulletin*.

*With deepest regrets we mark the passing of a dear friend and colleague, Christina Patterson, in August 2001.*

*Although Christina was only able to take part in the committee for a short time, we remember the passion and commitment she brought to her students and her work.*



The purpose of the *Literacy Materials Bulletin* has remained the same for the past twelve years. We provide reviews of relevant and appropriate resources that have been field-tested and approved by adult literacy students and their instructors. Please help us continue providing the useful information you have come to expect from the *Bulletin* by completing the following questionnaire and returning it by fax to Literacy BC.

1. We would like to know who is using the *Bulletin*. Please choose the option that best describes you.

- |                                                                     |                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Part-time or full-time literacy instructor | <input type="checkbox"/> Librarian        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer literacy tutor                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Literacy student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Program administrator                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____      |

2. We would like to know about the efficiency of our distribution system. How do you access the *Literacy Materials Bulletin*?

- ☐ I receive my own copy in the mail  
☐ One copy comes to my workplace and is shared  
☐ Several copies come to my workplace and are distributed  
☐ I read the reviews on The Hub  
☐ I access it on-line at <http://www.nald.ca/PROVINCE/BC/Lbc/pub/Bulletin/archive.htm>  
☐ Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

3. How important is the *Bulletin* in deciding which materials you will purchase?

Not useful      1                  2                  3                  4                  5                  Very useful

4. Our reviews often include direct quotes from students and instructors who have field-tested the material. How useful are these comments?

Not useful      1                  2                  3                  4                  5                  Very useful

5. We also include a sample page to show the size of print and /or type of illustrations. How important is it to include this type of information in the *Bulletin*?

Not useful      1                  2                  3                  4                  5                  Very useful

6. Regarding the range of materials reviewed in the *Bulletin*, are there any gaps in our coverage?

- ☐ No, all areas are adequately covered  
☐ Yes, I would like to see more reviews about \_\_\_\_\_

Please FAX your completed questionnaire to Literacy BC at 604-684-8520.  
Thank you for your co-operation and support!



## We would like to hear from you if you have materials to recommend, or requests.

If you would like to recommend some materials, please tell us the title, author and publisher and why you recommend the material. If possible, send us a photocopy of one page and the table of contents.

If you would like us to seek out, field-test and review a certain type of material, please tell us the content, level and format (book, video, software, etc.).

Please send information and questions to:

**Literacy Materials Bulletin Committee**

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### Subscribing to the Mailing List

The *Literacy Materials Bulletin* is distributed free to the literacy community of British Columbia and for a yearly fee of \$15 to out-of-province subscribers.

### Circulating Materials

There are two ways to borrow from the *Literacy Materials Bulletin* Collection:

- Individual items reviewed in the *Bulletin* are available on loan from the Literacy BC Resource Centre for five weeks.
- Entire sets of materials reviewed in Issues 24 and 25 are also available for five-week loans through the Bulletin Book Bag program.

To be added to the *Literacy Materials Bulletin* mailing list, to order back copies, or to borrow any of the materials reviewed in *Bulletins 1 - 24*, contact:

Literacy BC, Suite 601, 510 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 1L8

Telephone 1-800-663-1293 toll free in BC or (604) 684-0624 | Facsimile (604) 684-8520



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